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In-Plant Education Instituted With Digital Corporation

Mount Wachusett Community College and the University of Massachusetts at Amherst have developed a unique co-operative education program with the Digital Equipment Corporation, the fastest growing computer company in the world which employs over 14,000 people in the continental United States.

In September, Digital Equipment Corporation in Westminster assembled all 2000 of its workforce in order to explain the new in-plant educational program entitled "Digital Institute." Through participation in the program, any Digital employee possessing a high school diploma could very conveniently earn college credit and progress toward the attainment of an Associate or Baccalaureate Degree in one of six possible degree fields.

The response to the announcement was overwhelming. Over 475 employees or 25 per cent of the workforce enrolled in the new program when they heard of it said Ermond Norris, Digital's Director of Management Development and Training. "It's just the extra incentive that many need to go on to college. Now the employee seeking advancement has little excuse for not advancing his formal education."

Beginning in September the 2000 employees at the Digital Equipment Corporation's Westminster plant have had a convenient opportunity to earn college credit through Mount Wachusett Community College's in-plant education program. Approximately 25% of the workforce enrolled in the program during the first semester.

The idea for the new program was conceived in May by Norris who was then working on specialized management training programs to enhance the development and promotability of selected individuals within the firm. "There have been sweeping changes in electronics," Norris said, "and Digital recognizes the need for education. We decided we needed something that could best serve the entire plant--to include the 'little guy', not only management."

"Developing workers from within reduces the need for concentrated outside recruitment, and costly training of new personnel for supervising posts is avoided."

Daniel Donovan, a management instructor at Mount Wachusett Community College was hired by Ermond Norris to assist him in developing an educational program that would provide all employees with an opportunity to expand and grow in the organization.

"This development opportunity ought to be available to everyone," Donovan said. "Although the most able workers may be recognized first for development, predicting the success of an individual is very risky. Diamonds in the rough still exist. By broadening the self-development opportunities available to its workforce, Digital, hopefully, will be rewarded with the motivated workforce essential to its continued success."

In order to gauge the educational needs of Westminster employees, 2000 questionaires were distributed and their results analyzed. "With only 125 employees then receiving tuition refunds under the existing college incentive system, about 500 indicated they would en-

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At a recent dinner meeting of the Digital Institute Advisory Committee, recognition was given to those individuals who contributed directly to the successful development and implementation of the program. Receiving awards were (L to R) Dr. William Venmen, Director of Continuing Education, University of Massachusetts; John Smith, Plant Manager, Digital Westminster; Paul Newman, Personnel Manager, Digital Westminster; Ermond Norris, Management Training and Development, Digital Westminster; and President Arthur F. Haley, Mount Wachusett Community College.
Dr. Haley, who conducted the meeting, expressed his satisfaction with the program of Digital Institute to date and praised the spirit of cooperation and enthusiasm shown by all participants.

When Paul Antil, Training Manager at Digital Westminster, recently discovered that his immediate training requirements exceeded his in-plant classroom facilities, he called on MWCC for the loan of one classroom for two weeks to conduct a course in machine language programming. In return for use of the room, he provided the college with use of a computer and operator for a very successful display during the college's recent open house. "Why not, replied Antal, the Mount helped us and we could help them. It's really great that we can work so closely together."

Shown above is Frank Smith, an instructor at Digital conducting the course in machine language "PDP II, Concepts and Programmings."

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roll in courses if offered in the plant. But we never seriously expected that so many employees eventually would participate," Donovan stated.

"The most popular degree majors, in order of preference, were Business Administration, Engineering Technology, and Data Processing. With these degree programs closely paralleling the job requirements of Digital, and with the great interest employees had shown for an educational institute, we were confident that the fall implementation of the program would be successful," Donovan continued.

The next step was to locate a school that could provide the range of programs and services to meet Digitals requirements. The company consulted with representatives from eight area schools and requested that they each submit a formal proposal. The decision was made to affiliate with a consortium of the University of Massachusetts at Amherst and Mount Wachusett Community College.

The idea for Mount Wachusett to join with the University of Massachusetts in submitting a proposal was provided by Robert Farrell, staff assistant to President Haley, who organized the program on the part of Mount Wachusett. "It was a natural union," he said, "the synergistic interaction between two state institutions of higher learning, each with a different educational mission, each adding a different dimension to the service of a technical firm, can provide a level and a diversity of educational opportunity unequalled by a single school."

"To my knowledge, this formal association between Mount Wachusett and the University of Massachusetts is unique in the state and demonstrates the cooperation and willingness of both schools to respond to the educational needs of the community." Farrell continued.

Overseeing the program is a triparte Advisory Council that meets periodically throughout the semester to insure the academic regulation of the program and the qualitative aspects of the teaching process are being observed and followed. Included on the council are: University of Massachusetts representatives; William C. Venman, Director, Continuing Education; Dr. Margaret H. Freeman, Director, Extension Programs; Dr. Charles E. Hutchinson, Professor, School of Engineering; Kevin Grennan, Director, Academic Services; Mount Wachusett Community College representatives; President Arthur F. Haley; Robert Farrell, Assistant to the

Working on the planning of course offerings for the second semester of Digital Institute are (L to R) Ted Campbell, Management Training and Development at Digital; Ottmar Eckhart, Continuing Education Director, Mount Wachusett Community College; and Daniel Donovan, Program Coordinator, Digital Institute. Students will have an opportunity to select from thirty-six courses at registration time. Each course has been specifically selected to enable Digital Employees to enhance their job effectiveness, further their educational development, and progress toward attainment of an Associate of Baccalaureate degree. Several new courses requested by Digital to be added to the course offerings include typing, shorthand, and Spanish.

President; Ottmar E. Eckardt, Director of Continuing Education; and Digital Equipment Corporation representatives; John Smith, Westminster Plant Manager; Ermond Norris, Jr., Training Director; and Paul Neuman, Westminster Personnel Manager.

Special faculty steering committees have been established within the schools of engineering and business at the University of Massachusetts to investigate whether new courses and curricula might be developed that more closely relate to industry requirements.

A complete catalog for Digital institute, describing the program and course offerings was distributed to the employees at Digital's Westminster and Marlboro plants. At September registration, Westminster employees had an opportunity to select from 29 different course offerings in seven degree programs: Associate of Science in Electronic Engineering Technology; Associate of Science in Business Administration; Associate of Science in Data Processing; Associate of Science in General Studies (EE Transfer Program); Bachelor of Science in Business Administration; Bachelor of Science in Electrical Engineering; Bachelor of Science in Computer System Engineering. Except for Electronic Engineering Technology, each of the associate degree programs was especially developed for immediate transferability to the bachelor's degree program.

The initial enrollment of 475 employees filled forty-nine courses ranging from english composition, economics, and accounting to industrial electronics and calculus. Many courses have multiple sections, e.g., seven sections of english, five of principles of management, five of psychology and many others. Sixty percent of the students enrolled in the Business Administration academic program, fourteen percent in Electronic Engineering Technology program, eleven percent in the Computer System Engineering program, eight percent in the Data Processing program, and seven percent in the Electrical Engineering program.

In addition to the programs' required courses a unique new course developed by Dr. Richard Rollins entitled "fitness for effective living" is conducted in the plant cafeteria. It allows students to learn the fundamental components of physical fitness and work toward achieving and maintaining total fitness. Other personal enrichment courses of this nature hopefully will be offered in the future.

Both schools provide the instructional staff. A permanent student transcript of

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Testing Service Provided for Digital Employees

Mount Wachusett Community College recently provided a special testing date for employees of Digital in Westminster to take the Massachusetts Department of Education High School Equivalency Certificate Program (commonly known as the GED). This exam is ten hours long and was administered over three nights in the college library. Successful completion of the exam enables the applicant to receive a high school certificate from the Massachusetts Department of Education.

"We're highly in favor of this cooperative effort," states Mount Wachusett's Dean of Faculty John H. Bassett. "We are glad to provide any help we can give to area employees in this regard. This is an example of how industry and education can cooperate in seeing to it that the opportunity for self-improvement is available to all."

"This is the first time, to my knowledge, that a program of this type has been conducted in the area" said Dean Bassett. "I'm sure that the employees have appreciated the opportunity afforded them and I am hopeful we can conduct similar programs with other area firms."

Students who had difficulty in passing the exam may participate in a remedial program at Digital developed in cooperation with the Learning Center at Mount Wachusett. The program will be conducted during working hours and will concentrate on correcting academic weaknesses detected on the first exam.

MWCC Registrar Armand Landry issues a section of the 10 hour GED exam to employees of the Digital Equipment Corporation. Upon successful completion of the exam, the student is awarded a high school certificate from the Massachusetts Department of Education.

Professor Raymond Coleman conducts his introduction to psychology course in one of Digital's in-plant classrooms. The course is one of the 49 being conducted this semester as part of Digital Institute.

Ted Campbell, Training Manager Digital Westminster, is shown directing a management training seminar in a classroom at Mount Wachusett Community College. According to Mr. Campbell, the Mount has the finest facility in the area for the kind of program he conducts. Employees can come into an entirely new environment, away from the pressures and distractions of the plant, and relax and concentrate on improving their management skills, Mr. Campbell noted that the seminars are open to all faculty of the college who wish to learn some of the technique employed by industry in developing their management resources. "Perhaps some of what they learn can be applied to their own classroom lectures. Certainly the cooperation between the college and Digital has provided a number of benefits to both Digital employees and to the students and faculty at MWCC," said Campbell.

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all course grades is maintained by each school with any Mount Wachusett course transferable to the University of Massachusetts for degree credit and vice versa.

All classes are conducted at the plant. The employee working day ends at 4 p.m. and classes begin at 4:45 p.m. and run to 7:30 p.m. According to Norris, "Workers really appreciate the convenient schedule for the courses. Night classes at other colleges usually end at 10 p.m. making it difficult for students to have a normal home life." "Many companies offer financial incentive for education, but they very seldom think about its effect on the family. The added convenience of both place and time make this program almost too appealing to pass-up."

Most of the conveniences of a college are offered in the program. A bookstore organized by Lawrence Chapman of Mount Wachusett Community College was set up at the plant to sell books for both Mount Wachusett and the University of Massachusetts.

James Scharfenberger of Mount Wachusett Community College provides in-plant counseling for students enrolled in the Institute every Friday throughout the semester.

Audio-visual equipment needed for the classes is located onsite and students enrolled in computer programing courses have access to company computers as learning tools.

Paul Neuman, Personnel Manager of the Westminster Plant admits that, "the mechanics of coordinating the roles of U. Mass., Mount Wachusett, and Digital have been sometimes difficult, even frustrating; but in the final analysis Digital has a program that develops and enhances its most valuable resource, its people."

"People can have ideas, can improve jobs, and can increase Digital's profitability and organizational effectiveness," Neuman continues. "For these reasons, we must make investments in our people via informal off-the-job educational programs that will compliment and enhance the more specialized on-the-job training. It is this investment in people that more than anything else, will safeguard Digital's growth in the future."

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